

**WE CLAIM:**

1. A computer program product for controlling a target computer to perform an operation in response to data received from an initiating computer, said computer  
5 program product comprising:  
agent process code operable to execute on said target computer to provide an agent process to:  
receive at an agent process executing on said target computer  
autonomously generated operation specifying data sent from said  
10 initiating computer to said target computer;  
read from said operation specifying data an identifier of a target  
process for performing said operation; and  
if said target process is available to said target computer to pass at least  
a portion of said operation specifying data from said agent process to  
15 said target process; and  
target process code operable to provide one or more target processes for  
performing operations in response to operation specifying data, said one or more  
target processes being provided at said first computer independently of said agent  
process.  
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2. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation  
specifying data is passed from said initiating computer to said target computer as  
XML data.
- 25 3. A computer program product as claimed in claim 2, wherein said operation  
specifying data represents a target process as a complex data type within said XML  
data.
4. A computer program product as claimed in claim 3, wherein parameter data  
30 used by a target process is represented by data within said complex data type of said  
target process.
5. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation  
performed includes configuring said target computer to execute a computer program.

6. A computer program product as claimed in claim 5, wherein said target process is operable to map configuration data specified within said operation specifying data to a configuration data store of said target computer.

7. A computer program product as claimed in claim 6, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

- a Windows Registry entry;
- an INI file;
- a DAPI store; and
- a database entry.

8. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said identifier of a target process includes at least one of:

- data specifying a computer file operable to trigger said target process;
- data specifying a communication channel operable to trigger said target process; and
- data specifying an operating system command operable to trigger said target process.

9. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation specifying data includes parameter data used by said target process in said operation.

10. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation includes returning result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon said operation performed by said target process.

11. A computer program product as claimed in claim 10, wherein said result data includes data specifying existing configuration data of said target computer.

12. A computer program product as claimed in claim 11, wherein said target process is operable to map existing configuration data of said target computer stored within a configuration data store of said target computer to said result data to be returned to said initiating computer.

13. A computer program product as claimed in claim 12, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

- a Windows Registry entry;
- an INI file;
- a DAPI store; and
- a database entry.

14. A computer program product as claimed in claim 12, wherein said result data is passed from said target computer to said initiating computer as XML data.

15. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation includes returning result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon whether or not said target process is available to said target computer.

16. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein an operation that may be performed by said target computer includes installing a new target process.

17. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said operation specifying data is validated by said target computer by comparing with a template defining valid data.

18. A method of controlling a target computer to perform an operation in response to data received from an initiating computer, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at an agent process executing on said target computer autonomously generated operation specifying data sent from said initiating computer to said target computer;

reading from said operation specifying data an identifier of a target process for performing said operation;

if said target process is available to said target computer, then passing at least a portion of said operation specifying data from said agent process to said target process; and

performing said operation using said target process; wherein

one or more target processes for performing operations in response to operation specifying data are provided at said first computer independently of said agent process.

19. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation specifying data is passed from said initiating computer to said target computer as XML data.

20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein said operation specifying data represents a target process as a complex data type within said XML data.

21. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein parameter data used by a target process is represented by data within said complex data type of said target process.

22. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation performed includes configuring said target computer to execute a computer program.

23. A method as claimed in claim 22, wherein said target process is operable to map configuration data specified within said operation specifying data to a configuration data store of said target computer.

24. A method as claimed in claim 23, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

- a Windows Registry entry;
- an INI file;
- a DAPI store; and
- a database entry.

25. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said identifier of a target process includes at least one of:

- data specifying a computer file operable to trigger said target process;
- data specifying a communication channel operable to trigger said target process; and
- data specifying an operating system command operable to trigger said target process.

26. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation specifying data includes parameter data used by said target process in said operation.

5 27. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation includes returning result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon said operation performed by said target process.

10 28. A method as claimed in claim 27, wherein said result data includes data specifying existing configuration data of said target computer.

15 29. A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein said target process is operable to map existing configuration data of said target computer stored within a configuration data store of said target computer to said result data to be returned to said initiating computer.

30. A method as claimed in claim 29, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

20 a Windows Registry entry;  
an INI file;  
a DAPI store; and  
a database entry.

25 31. A method as claimed in claim 29, wherein said result data is passed from said target computer to said initiating computer as XML data.

30 32. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation includes returning result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon whether or not said target process is available to said target computer.

33. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein an operation that may be performed by said target computer includes installing a new target process.

34. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said operation specifying data is validated by said target computer by comparing with a template defining valid data.

35. Apparatus for controlling a target computer to perform an operation in response to data received from an initiating computer, said apparatus comprising:  
agent process logic of said target computer to provide an agent process to:  
receive at an agent process executing on said target computer  
autonomously generated operation specifying data sent from said  
initiating computer to said target computer;  
read from said operation specifying data an identifier of a target  
process for performing said operation; and  
if said target process is available to said target computer to pass at least  
a portion of said operation specifying data from said agent process to  
said target process; and  
target process logic operable to provide one or more target processes for  
performing operations in response to operation specifying data, said one or more  
target processes being provided at said first computer independently of said agent  
process.

36. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation specifying data is passed from said initiating computer to said target computer as XML data.

37. Apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein said operation specifying data represents a target process as a complex data type within said XML data.

38. Apparatus as claimed in claim 37, wherein parameter data used by a target process is represented by data within said complex data type of said target process.

39. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation performed includes configuring said target computer to execute a computer program.

40. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said target process is operable to map configuration data specified within said operation specifying data to a configuration data store of said target computer.

41. Apparatus as claimed in claim 40, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

- a Windows Registry entry;
- an INI file;
- a DAPI store; and
- a database entry.

42. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said identifier of a target process includes at least one of:

- data specifying a computer file operable to trigger said target process;
- data specifying a communication channel operable to trigger said target process; and
- data specifying an operating system command operable to trigger said target process.

43. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation specifying data includes parameter data used by said target process in said operation.

44. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation includes returning result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon said operation performed by said target process.

45. Apparatus as claimed in claim 44, wherein said result data includes data specifying existing configuration data of said target computer.

46. Apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein said target process is operable to map existing configuration data of said target computer stored within a configuration data store of said target computer to said result data to be returned to said initiating computer.

47. Apparatus as claimed in claim 46, wherein said configuration data store is one of:

- a Windows Registry entry;

an INI file;  
a DAPI store; and  
a database entry.

5 48. Apparatus as claimed in claim 46, wherein said result data is passed from said  
target computer to said initiating computer as XML data.

49. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation includes returning  
result data from said target computer to said initiating computer in dependence upon  
10 whether or not said target process is available to said target computer.

50. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein an operation that may be performed  
by said target computer includes installing a new target process.

15 51. Apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein said operation specifying data is  
validated by said target computer by comparing with a template defining valid data.